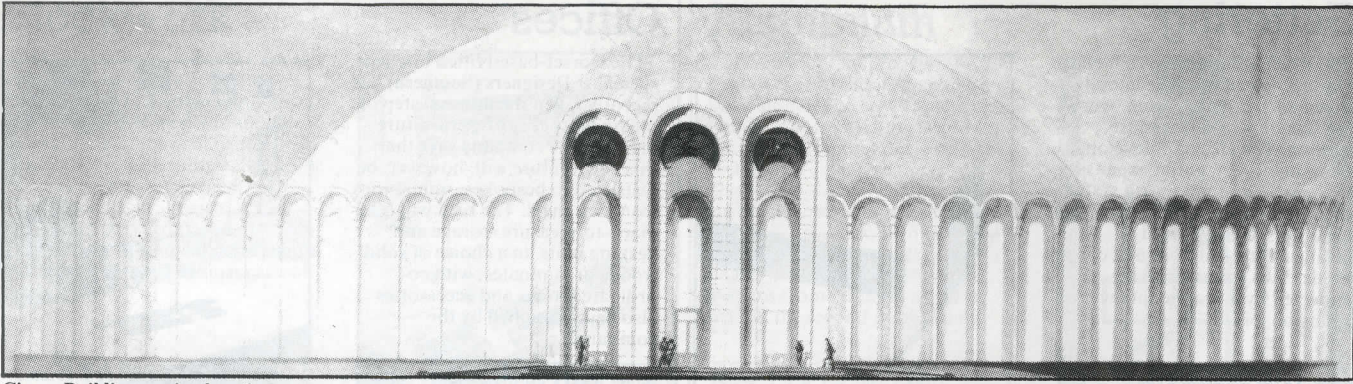


## Books



Circus Building, main elevation.

Commissariat of Heavy Industry, Moscow 1934. Dominated by three characteristic Leonidov towers, the design is monumental in its attempt to subordinate Red Square and exhibits an extension of Leonidov's vocabulary to include a few coloured and decorative motifs. It was criticised for being "formalistic and utopian" and for some evoked "feelings of vexed disappointment".

By 1934, the cultural "counter-revolution" had been completed, and Leonidov, along with those inspired by his work, had been theoretically ostracised by the conquering school

of Russian neo-classicism and its interpretation of propaganda and a monumental built environment suitable for the building of socialism. Nevertheless, Leonidov ended the 30s working on a pioneer camp in the Crimea in a team headed by Mosei Ginzburg. It ironically includes many classical images including an acropolis, amphitheatres and colonnades. This project also shows an extension of Leonidov's graphic skills with the elevations painted on plywood.

After the war, Leonidov continued teaching and working on his utopian project for a City

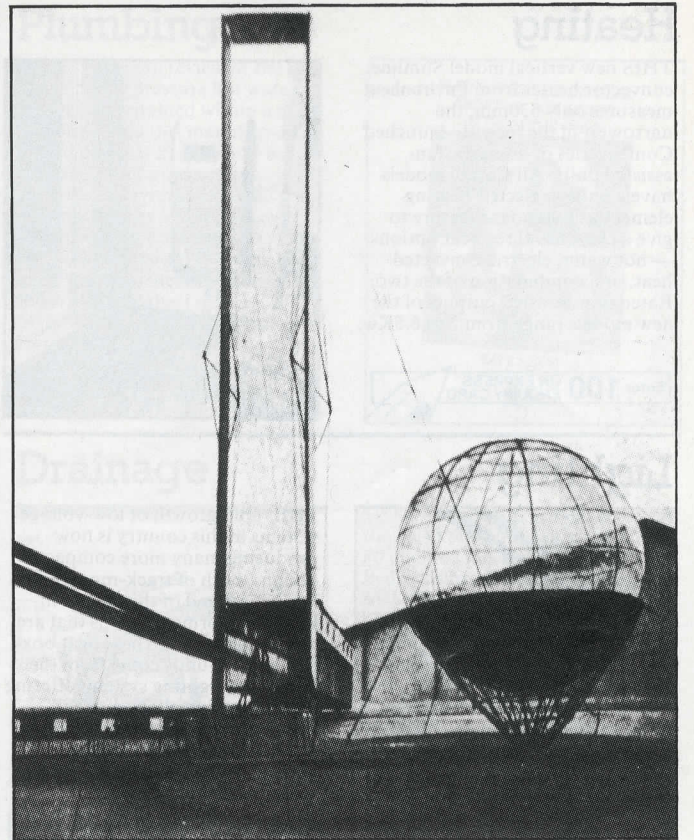
in the Sun, 1943-1959, displaying the full range of his graphic skills and a synthesis of many of his ideas on form and space.

The well-designed book is packed with illustrations that are excellently reproduced. In meeting the authors' objective of providing a document and catalogue of Leonidov's work, it is an undoubted success. But the absence of discussion of some of the wider issues leaves this critic a little bit disappointed.

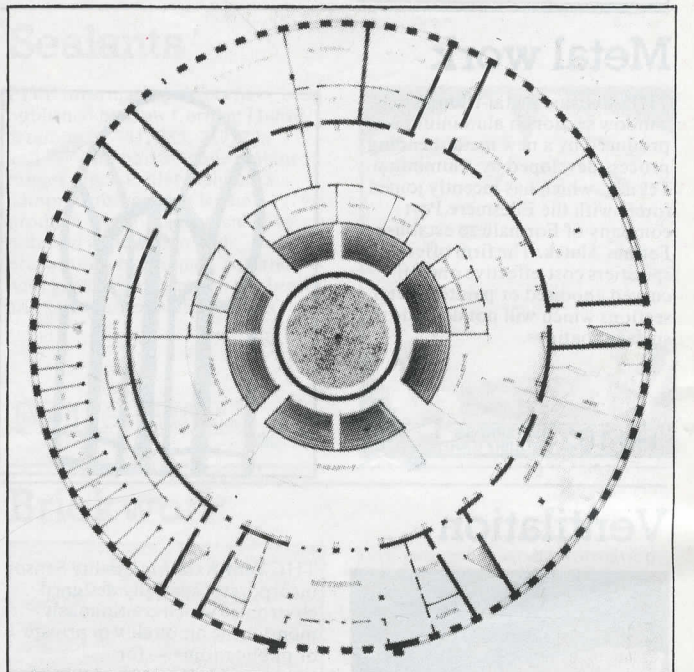
The book makes clear Leonidov's contribution to 20th century art and architectural history. But it is a shame that the book does not face some of the

wider issues at stake: the contradictions of an architect in a mass society and of an architect as social organiser and engineer; the transition from a capitalist mode of production to a socialist mode of production; the role of ideology and architecture in the process of transition; and the relationship between material and cultural production and consumption. These are all issues raised by the events in the Soviet Union and are as relevant today as they were in the 20s and 30s.

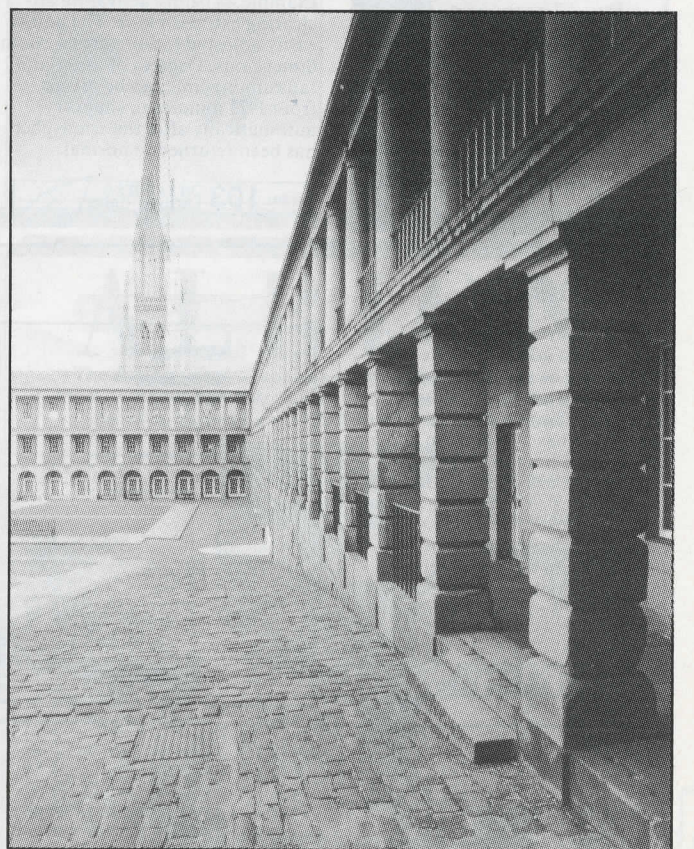
*Jonathan Charley is an architect specialising in Soviet studies.*



The Lenin Institute of Librarianship.



Circus Building, Moscow (1955), ground-floor plan.



Not many diploma theses get turned into books: but then not many diploma theses have as their subject a building as remarkable and as unresearched as the Halifax Piece Hall. Built in the 1770s as the centrepiece of the local woollen industry, the massive courtyard was surrounded by a two-tier arcade (Tuscan above, rusticated below) resting on a basement arcade. In form it drew both on local precedents (the wool halls of neighbouring Huddersfield and Leeds), and on foreign exemplars both medieval (Ypres cloth hall of the 13th century) and renaissance (the books of Alberti and Palladio).

Halifax-born Philip Smithies (now working for Stirling Wilford) chose to make the building the subject of his diploma thesis at the Architectural Association and has published the result in an admirable private edition. At £5.95 for 104 pages and 87 illustrations (including colour), it's a snip. Available from Fred Wade, 14/16 Rawson St, Halifax, West Yorkshire HX1 1NH. Tel: (0422) 54400, and selected bookshops. The illustration (above) shows the great courtyard from the piece hall.



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